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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings from the qualitative component of a study of first-year teachers in urban schools in Connecticut during the school year 1989-90. Five first-year teachers, each from a different school in the Hartford (Connecticut) Public School System, were interviewed at 2-week intervals throughout the school year. The study was designed to identify alterable factors that mediate the first-year experience. Previous conceptualizations of the first-vear experience are analyzed, and policy implications are identified in light of the experience of these teachers. Four perspectives on the first-year experience that are prevalent in the research were examined: (1) adult socialization; (2) reality shock; (3) attitude and efficacy changes; and (4) teacher concerns. Findings suggest that by attending to beginning teacher age and school culture when assigning novices, promoting opportunities for adult collaboration, and encouraging administrator attention to the instructional performance of teachers, urban schools can positively affect the induction-year experience. There is a 50-item list of references. (SLD)

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ALTERABLE FACTORS THAT MEDIATE THE INDUCTION-YEAR EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

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This paper reports the findings from the qualitative component of a study of first-year teachers in urban schools in Connecticut during school-year 1989-90. The study was designed to identify alterable factors that mediate the first-year experience. Previous conceptualizations of the first-year experience are analyzed and policy implications identified in light of the experiences of the teachers in this study. The findings suggest that by attending to beginning teacher age and school culture when assigning novices, promoting opportunities for adult collaboration, and encouraging administrator attention to the instructional performance of teachers, urban schools can positively affect the induction-year experience.

THE STUDY

To understand teacher induction in urban districts it is necessary to produce a detailed description of the experience of novice teachers. Through this study I examined how organizational structures, beginning teacher personal characteristics, and beginning teachers' relationships with other members of the school community mediated the first-year experience. I considered the perception of beginning teachers along with the insights of their peers and administrators.

As a review of the literature about novice teachers suggests (Chester, 1991a; Veenman, 1984), most studies have employed unidimensional strategies to examine the experience of beginning teachers. Many studies were initiated in the fall of the first year of teaching and failed to track novices' experiences over the course of the school year (Carew & Lightfoot, 1979; Gomez & Comeaux, 1990). In his review of the research on the problems of beginning teachers, Veenman (1984) concluded that researchers should consider the convergence of individual perception *and* the context of institutional settings. He stated that "we still know little about the person-specific and situation-specific nature of these problems . . . little or no information about the

features of educational situations that teachers experience as problematic, about the psychological dimensions of meaning underlying these situations, and about the significant personal characteristics of beginning teachers that interact with these situations. Research based on an interactive paradigm that takes into account person-environment interactions, might provide that much-needed information" (p. 168).

By utilizing multiple research methods I was able to consider the perceptions of individual teachers and their administrators and colleagues in light of the institutional contexts in which they worked. Through periodic observations and interviews over the course of the school year, along with large-scale survey data, I was able to gain an understanding of the first-year experience, which in turn permitted me to identify policy variables that predicted changes in the self-efficacy beliefs of beginning teachers (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

This paper presents the findings of the qualitative component of my research, which involved detailed observation of, and interviews with, five beginning teachers in one urban district in Connecticut over the course of the 1989-90 school year. The results of the quantitative component of this study, which utilized multiple surveys of beginning teachers in urban districts, were reported earlier (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). Analyses of the survey data were used to validate findings from the present qualitative study.

Selection of Teachers

Five first-year teachers, each from a different school, were selected from the Hartford, Connecticut public school system for the qualitative component of the study. The selection of five teachers avoided the idiosyncrasies of conclusions drawn from the study of one subject or school and permitted the observation of diverse contexts within a single school district.

The schools from which the teachers were chosen included three elementary, one middle, and one high school (in school-year 1989-90 the district had 25 elementary schools, five of which were K-8 schools; two middle schools, grades 7-8; and three high schools). The elementary schools from which teachers were selected represented a continuum from low to high aggregate student achievement, as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test. Selection of teachers and schools in this manner permitted examination of the interdependence of organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal variables, and their relationship to the experiences of first-year teachers.

All of the selected teachers were white females. None had taught full-time prior to the 1989-90 school year. A brief description of each teacher and her school follows:

Ms. Lincoln: Ms. Lincoln was in her early twenties during school-year 1989-90, which was her first out of college. Having grown up in Connecticut, she went to college in Providence where she was a special education major. Ms. Lincoln was assigned to a grade K-6 school where close to 90 percent of the enrollment was Latino. Most of the students came from families of meager fiscal means, and most were of Puerto Rican background. Ms. Lincoln taught a self-contained class of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students who were classified learning disabled. The students in her class presented a substantial range of age and social, emotional, academic, and physiological development.

Ms. DiAngelo: Also in her early twenties and first year out of college, Ms. DiAngelo grew up outside of Hartford and attended a local university where she was a special education major. She was assigned to a self-contained class of first and second graders at an elementary school in the north end of the city that served predominantly black, middle class families. Ms. DiAngelo's students were transported from outside the school attendance zone, and although hers was a learning disability

class, the students manifest a range of challenges, including language, physical, and social emotional disabilities.

Ms. Gustin: Ms. Gustin came to teaching through Connecticut's Alternate Route to Certification program when she was in her late twenties. Following her graduation from college as a mathematics major, she worked as a computer programmer for a local insurance company. Her experience as a volunteer in a Hartford classroom convinced her she wanted to teach. Ms. Gustin's teacher preparation program took place during the summer of 1989, and involved classes in teaching methodology, classroom management, and content pedagogy, and student teaching in a summer school program under the supervision of an experienced teacher. She was hired to teach mathematics to seventh graders in one of Hartford's middle schools. The school served black and Hispanic students from a range of economic backgrounds. Ms. Gustin was a member of a team of academic teachers who were assigned the "low ability" students.

Ms. Arden: Ms. Arden was 40 years old when she began her teaching career in 1989. Originally from the mid-west, she had been working in the theater arts in Connecticut before returning to college for her teacher preparation work. Ms. Arden had completed her student teaching in the same elementary school at which she was hired. The school served predominantly black and Latino students, most of whom were from low income backgrounds. Ms. Arden taught a self-contained fifth grade class.

Ms. Mazer: Ms. Mazer grew up in Connecticut but attended college in Boston, where she was an English major. She did her student teaching at a Boston high school. Prior to being hired by Hartford, Ms. Mazer worked as a long term substitute teacher in another urban district in Connecticut. She was in her early twenties in 1989, when she began teaching in one of Hartford's high schools. The student body

was mostly black, with a few Latino students. Pupils came from a range of economic backgrounds.

Interviews and Observations

Each teacher was interviewed once every two weeks during the school year at the school site. Every second interview was preceded by a classroom observation of a lesson taught by the beginning teacher. Two week intervals provided enough discontinuity to discern changes in teacher attitudes and behavior. At the same time, periodic visits permitted me to document the first year of teaching as an evolving, continuous experience, providing a longitudinal perspective of the induction year (Carew & Lightfoot, 1979).

The longitudinal classroom observations had two foci: the teacher and the developing classroom social structure. Teacher-focused observations recorded the teacher's interactions with individuals and groups of students. Observations of the variation in a teacher's interaction with, and between, individual students over time provided clues to her expectations for student achievement and beliefs regarding her own efficaciousness. Observations of the evolving classroom social structure led to an understanding of the the teacher's beliefs, values, and attitudes toward teaching.

During observations, comments about the physical environment of the classroom, student and teacher behavior, and student-teacher and student-student interaction were recorded. Through scripting, teacher and student dialogue and observational comments about the classes were captured.

Initially, interviews solicited information regarding each beginning teacher's relationships with others in the building, instructional practices, background, expectations, and perceptions, as well as school practices and characteristics. Subsequent interviews included questions regarding events, relationships, concerns, perceptions, and themes revealed in earlier discussions. Interviews that followed classroom visits drew on observed events and sought teacher interpretation of

observed behavior. Through the interviews, the teacher's attitudes toward teaching and self-efficacy beliefs were examined and tracked over the course of the year.

Interviews with selected administrators and colleagues were conducted during the second semester of the school year to provide additional perspectives on the experience of the first-year teacher. Administrators and faculty were selected whom the beginning teacher identified as key influences on her experience. Interviews with these individuals were designed to understand the school's structure, organization, and culture and how these dimensions might have affected the experience of the beginning teacher.

When the teacher's explanation of events seemed at odds with other evidence or perceptions, she was asked to explain the seeming contradiction. The teacher's reflection was prompted later in the year by sharing her perceptions from earlier interviews. Events and themes that were prominent early in the year were revisited in subsequent interviews to elicit the teacher's perception of her first-year experience and growth.

Analysis of Interview and Observation Data

Each interview was reviewed three times -- following the interview, when reading the transcript prior to the subsequent interview, and while rereading the transcripts in preparation for writing. A thematic approach was used to code and analyze the interview and observational data. Initially, themes were identified based on beginning teacher expectations; the teacher's relationships with colleagues, supervisors, students, and parents; sources of support for the beginning teacher; and the effects of institutional constraints. Subsequent analyses of the data uncovered themes most relevant to each beginning teacher that revealed other factors and dynamics affecting the first-year experience. Data that were revealing of the teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs were highlighted.

For each beginning teacher, a portrait of the institutional context in which the teacher worked was developed. The influence of the organizational structure, collegial relationships, community, and students on the experience of each first-year teacher was explicated, along with a chronicle of the first year of teaching. The data from observations of, and interviews with, the beginning teacher were triangulated with information from other school personnel so that the dynamics and factors that influenced the teacher's first year of teaching could be examined.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to relate the richness, depth, and breadth of each first-year teacher's experience. This level of detail is reported elsewhere (Chester, 1991a). The next two sections of this paper will be devoted to an analysis of previous conceptualizations of the first-year experience and the identification of policy implications in light of the experience of the teachers in this study.

VISITING PREVIOUS CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

Many researchers have investigated the experiences of beginning teachers. The resulting studies have broadened our understanding of the induction experience. However, the methodology employed by any given study has shaped, and limited, the conceptualizations and findings that ensue. Typically, researchers have examined a narrow slice of the novice's life, utilizing low-inference data-gathering strategies. By comparing the experiences of the teachers in this study with the conclusions of other researchers, I show that the methodology employed in most previous studies limits the ability to understand the depth and breadth of the teacher's experience, and the relationship of key question variables to other institutional and personal factors (Veenman, 1984).

Additionally, few studies have specifically focused on the experience of beginning teachers in urban schools. Grant (1989) and Haberman (1987, 1988) have

examined issues of preparation, recruitment, and selection of urban teachers. Kozol's autobiographical account (1967) of the first year of teaching provided a scathing indictment of schooling in segregated Boston during the 1960s, but lacked "serious attention to systematic inquiry" (Carew & Lightfoot, 1979, p. 24).

In this section of the paper I examine four perspectives on the first-year teaching experience that are prevalent in the research -- adult socialization, reality shock, attitude and efficacy changes, and teacher concerns -- in light of the experience of the teachers in this study.

Adult Socialization

Several ideas advanced by adult socialization (Nicholson & West, 1988; Wanous, 1980) and life-span research (Becker, 1970; Huberman, 1989) can be tested through this study. The first is the notion that many individuals across different professions progress through a series of career stages. During the initial exploratory stage, that corresponds to the teacher's induction year, the individual is concerned with issues of survival and discovery.

To one degree or another, all five of the teachers in my qualitative study were concerned with coping with the realities of being on their own in the classroom and discovering the parameters of the teaching role. However, the nature and intensity of survival and discovery concerns differed according to person-specific characteristics. For Ms. Gustin and Ms. Lincoln, survival had a day-to-day urgency. Both were tentative and inconsistent in their application of standards and consequences early in the year which resulted in a proliferation of management concerns. Day-to-day management came relatively easily to Ms. Arden and Ms. DiAngelo, who were well-organized and self-confident individuals.

Issues of survival and discovery also differed according to institutional contexts. Ms. Arden had to reconcile her commitment to teaching with the alienation she felt from her peers and the lack of communication with her principal that she experienced.

Ms. DiAngelo had to cope with the unresponsiveness of the special education department. By the end of the year she had defined survival not as an issue of continuing in the teaching profession, but as one of weighing her commitment to urban education with what she perceived to be better support and working conditions in suburban schools.

Life-span researchers have asserted that age is a less important determinant of career development than critical historical and sociological factors (Huberman, 1989). On a case-by-case basis, this appears to be true. Ms. Mazer, Ms. DiAngelo, and Ms. Lincoln, who were all in their early twenties, had fundamentally different induction experiences. Ms. DiAngelo's belief in her efficaciousness was strong, but the limited institutional support she experienced shook her commitment to teaching in an urban setting. Ms. Mazer and Ms. Lincoln both taught in schools where they perceived a substantial level of support. Both remained committed to teaching in the city.

Ms. Gustin and Ms. Garden, who were older when they started teaching, also had substantially different experiences. Ms. Garden's strong self-efficacy beliefs and resourcefulness outweighed the lack of support she experienced. She remained highly committed to teaching in the city. Ms. Gustin, who had the support of her mentor and principal, struggled to overcome her classroom management deficits, which were exacerbated by the student assignment practices of the school. Without a change of placement, she was not sure she would return to the same school the next year. While age was not irrelevant, the differences in the induction experience of these teachers can best be understood within the context of critical person-specific factors and their interaction with the institutional context.

Although the importance of historical and sociological influences cannot be denied, the influence of age should not be discounted. Research indicates that age is a significant predictor of changes in attitudes toward the profession for novice teachers in urban schools (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). It may be that age often serves as a proxy

for commitment and predisposition to teaching in an urban environment. Both Ms. Gustin and Ms. Garden, who were older than most other beginners, manifest these characteristics. Both left professions in which they had been successful. To some degree, each sought greater personal fulfillment through teaching. Both assigned a value-addedness to working in an urban setting. In part this was because they felt there was a greater need for their services in the city than elsewhere.

Limitations result from the sampling methodology of life-span research within the teaching profession. Insufficient attention to the effect of institutional variation on teachers' career trajectories and attitudes, and sampling that precludes teachers with little experience (Huberman, 1989) leave critical questions about the first year experience unanswered. This study indicates that institutional variables that can be altered by schools influence the induction-year experience.

Reality Shock

The phenomenon of the abrupt transition from preservice education to the realities of organizational entry, or "reality shock," is a common emphasis in beginning teacher research (cf., Day, 1959; Corcoran, 1981; Gaede, 1987; Hogben & Petty, 1979). The present study supports the notion that moving from preservice to the first year creates the need for teachers to bridge the gap between what they know and what they need to know. However, only the experience of Ms. Lincoln, and to a lesser extent Ms. Gustin, could be characterized as one of "transition shock." Both began their career with a limited repertoire of pedagogical and classroom management skills from which to draw, which severely constrained their effectiveness with students.

While Ms. Arden and Ms. DiAngelo experienced attitude changes that were tied to their perceptions of low levels of institutional support, discrepancies between their preservice preparation and the first-year experience were not important issues for either. Both drew on strong self-efficacy beliefs and entered with a solid repertoire of instructional and classroom management techniques. Ms. Mazer began the year with

a limited number of instructional strategies from which to draw, but found that the high school context provided multiple opportunities for support. She avoided the shock that has been associated with the first-year experience by taking advantage of the support opportunities that were present.

In short, while each of the teachers in this study had to cope with the transition into the first year, for three of the five this period could hardly be characterized as the abrupt and debilitating shock that other researchers have reported. Institutional support features and personal self-efficacy beliefs, as well as the repertoire of instructional and management skills that the teacher brings to the first year, appear to be important determinants of the transition experience.

Attitude and Efficacy Changes

Considerable evidence suggests that substantial relationships exist between teacher self-efficacy beliefs, attitudes toward teaching, instructional effectiveness, and teacher attrition (Armor et al., 1976; Aston & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1986; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Brookover et al., 1978; Brophy & Evertson, 1977; Bullough, 1989; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1989; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Corcoran, 1981; Dusek, 1985; Gaede, 1978; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Glassberg, 1979; Hogben & Petty, 1979; Ogbu, 1974). A number of researchers have documented a decline in teachers' attitudes toward teaching and self-efficacy beliefs during the first year of school (Day, 1959; Kuhlman & Hoy, 1974; Hogben & Petty, 1979). The evidence from this study supports the notion that efficacy beliefs change during the first year, but contradicts the conclusion that, on average, attitudes toward teaching and the self-efficacy mechanism declines.

Earlier studies identified trajectories that typified the attitude changes that were observed. Day (1959) found that attitudes decline during the first semester of the school year, while Hogben and Petty (1979) located the decline in the first few weeks of teaching, with little change occurring over the remainder of the school year. This

study does not support the existence of a dominant attitude trajectory that novices experience. The teachers who participated in the quantitative component of this study reported a range of change in self-efficacy beliefs, including declines and positive growth (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). Likewise, the teachers in the qualitative study experienced a variety of attitude and efficacy changes.

Ms. Lincoln's attitude toward teaching and efficacy beliefs reached bottom at mid-year, having started the year on a high. After hard work and some successes with classroom management skills, her outlook and feelings improved slowly and steadily during the second semester. Ms. Gustin's outlook declined slowly throughout the year as the dynamics of the cluster to which she was assigned also declined. Ms. Arden's attitude and efficacy beliefs were always strong, and they improved toward the end of the year as she received kudos for the first time from her principal and peers. Ms. DiAngelo's attitude and self-efficacy mechanism, which were strong in the beginning, suffered a gradual erosion as she struggled to find a perspective on the lack of institutional support that she experienced.

Teacher Concerns

Many researchers have documented the concerns that dominate the first-year experience (Adams, Hutchinson, & Martray, 1980; Adams & Martray, 1981; Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Gehrke & Kay, 1984; Glassberg, 1979; Grant & Zeichner, 1981; Hunt & Joyce, 1981; Pantaniczek & Isaacson, 1981; Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983). The present study supports Veenman's (1984) conclusion that aggregating and ranking concerns without attending to institutional and person-specific variables provides little guidance for policy and practice. While the five teachers in my qualitative study shared some of the same concerns that Veenman found to be most prevalent (classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual student differences, materials and supplies), the concerns varied in intensity

for each of the teachers. In each case, situation and person-specific variables influenced the weight of the concern.

Ms. Lincoln and Ms. Gustin, who both started the year with limited classroom management skills, were preoccupied with discipline concerns for much of the year. Ms. Mazer, who had ample supplies and materials with which to work as well as the support of several adults in the English department, was primarily concerned with motivating students and managing the curriculum. Ms. DiAngelo and Ms. Arden, both of whom started with healthy self-efficacy beliefs and strong convictions about student potential, often focused on dealing with student differences.

POLICY-MANIPULABLE VARIABLES IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDIES

Three critical influences on change in self-efficacy were identified by each of the five teachers in this study: opportunities to collaborate with other adults in the school, the attention of supervisors to the instructional performance of teachers, and the availability of material and human resources. Analyses of the quantitative data confirmed that each of these policy variables predicted changes in efficacy (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

Collaboration

Recent literature stresses the importance of collegial norms (cf., Barth, 1990; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Goodlad, 1984; Johnson, 1991; Little, 1982, 1990b; Rosenholz, 1989; Sizer, 1992). The findings of this study confirm the importance of collaboration.

Teachers in this study stressed the value of collaboration with adults in the building, and the consequences of low levels of cooperation. Ms. Mazer experienced a high level of collaboration. She had frequent, constructive contact with her supervisor and her "buddy teacher" was a steady source of support. Her attitude

regarding teaching in the city was quite positive by the end of the year. Ms. Gustin, who was a member of a faculty team that became increasingly dysfunctional as the year progressed, experienced low levels of collaboration. This became a major source of dissatisfaction and negatively affected her belief in her ability to be an effective teacher. By the end of the year Ms. Gustin wanted to return to the school, but made it clear to her principal that she wanted to be reassigned to a team where the teachers collaborated with each other to a greater degree than occurred with her first-year team.

The teachers' age and sense of dedication to urban teaching were critical influences on attitudes toward teaching in an urban school and a sense of efficacy. Recall that Ms. Arden was the oldest novice in my study, and that she had a strong commitment to teaching in the city. While she perceived that opportunities for communication and collaboration with her principal and peers were limited, her self-efficacy beliefs remained strong. Ms. DiAngelo also perceived that her school context provided low levels of collaboration. In part, this reflected her experience within the special education department. However, unlike Ms. Arden, Ms DiAngelo, who was in her early twenties, questioned her ability and desire to be effective in a setting with little support.

The quantitative component of this study revealed that opportunities for collaboration with administrators and other teachers were a strong predictor of changes in both novice and experienced teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Removing the effect of age, teachers who were assigned to schools in which they perceived high degrees of collaboration among teachers and administrators reported substantially higher values of change in self-efficacy beliefs than those who worked in schools with little opportunity for collaboration with other adults. While age had a significant effect on growth in efficacy among beginning teachers, the quantitative data suggest that opportunities for collaboration can compensate for the effect of age. Among novice

teachers who reported high levels of collaboration, only the youngest were predicted to experience declines in self-efficacy beliefs, and those declines were modest. In contrast, among beginning teachers who experienced low levels of collaboration, younger novices reported substantial declines in efficacy beliefs (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

Supervisor Attention to Teacher Performance

The teachers in this study were anxious to receive feedback on their performance and to learn where they stood in relation to their administrators' expectations. Because of the departmental organization of the secondary schools, Ms. Gustin and Ms. Mazer were observed by their department chairperson as well as administrators in the school. Both teachers were observed by their supervisors early in the school year and were provided with a critique of their teaching as well as suggestions for strengthening their pedagogical and management skills.

The earliest that any of the three elementary teachers was observed by their supervisor was January, and for two of these teachers there were only two formal observations conducted during the school year. Feedback was not always provided in a timely manner. The absence of feedback early in the year resulted in feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and neglect. Each felt uncertain about the administrator's perception of her performance, and each was eager to be critiqued. Additionally, failure to observe the beginning teachers until later in the year sometimes resulted in the feeling that competence in the instructional domain was devalued. Both Ms. Lincoln and Ms. Arden experienced this phenomenon: Ms. Lincoln because the feedback she did receive focused on non-instructional areas, and Ms. Arden because she did not receive explicit feedback until May.

Analysis of the quantitative data from this study confirmed that supervisors' attention to performance dimensions was a predictor of changes in self-efficacy beliefs for novice teachers. Greater numbers of supervisor observations were associated with

more positive changes in self-efficacy beliefs for both novice and experienced teachers (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

Resources

The effect of resources contradicted the conventional wisdom of the teachers in the qualitative study, each of whom stressed the need for adequate resources and materials, and were convinced that a teacher could not have too many. Analysis of the quantitative data produced evidence that contradicted this belief.

The youngest teachers, whether experienced or beginners, who were provided high levels of resources experienced substantial declines in self-efficacy beliefs, while those with few resources experienced slight increases. In contrast, older teachers, whether experienced or beginning, who had high levels of resource, reported increases in efficacy beliefs (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

One explanation for this resource effect can be characterized as a "decision overload" phenomenon. While all novices expressed the desire for as many resources as possible, richness of resources results in a proliferation of instructional choices and increases the curricular management demands on the teacher. Perhaps experienced teachers and older novices find that this richness of choice enhances their instructional efficacy, while younger teachers have problems managing the decisions that result.

Ms. Mazer, who had access to the most resources, found this richness to be problematic. She was a young, high school English teacher who had a large number of literary texts and curricular materials which were available for her use. The curricular and instructional choices that resulted were accompanied by a lack of explicit expectations and direction for making decisions regarding those options. As this teacher's experienced colleague noted, "It [the curriculum] is so broad ... They leave it up to you what you cover ... So there is some freedom. Perhaps it is too much

... When I started ... it was very, very structured. Because it gave me a starting base and I knew exactly what I had to do and what I had to accomplish."

In contrast, Ms. Arden, the oldest novice, thrived with lots of curricular and instructional materials. Although her school provided her with limited resources, she found ways to borrow, buy, and make materials which she then incorporated into the classroom curriculum. Every time I entered her classroom I saw evidence of a wide breadth of projects and activities in which her students were engaged. By using multiple resources, Ms. Arden was able to create the rich and varied classroom environment that she was convinced was needed for her students to thrive. Her drive to create an effective classroom was a manifestation of the conviction that led her to become a teacher later in life.

Summary

Three variables were identified through the qualitative component of this study, and verified by the quantitative analysis, that influence teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Each of the three factors can be altered through school or district initiative. Teachers who taught in schools where they perceived many opportunities for collaboration with other adults reported more positive changes in efficacy-beliefs than those who worked in schools with low levels of collaboration. Likewise, teachers in schools where the administrators attended to instructional performance and provided feedback in a timely fashion experienced more positive changes in efficacy than their counterparts in schools where there was little attention paid to issues of teacher performance.

The influence of resources varied according to the age and experience of the teachers. Younger teachers found that high levels of resources do not necessarily strengthen their efficaciousness. Older novices seemed to benefit from the presence of many instructional resources. Older experienced teachers reported that low levels of resources detracted from their efficaciousness (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A number of policy implications are suggested by the findings from this study. In this section I will discuss hiring and induction practices, the assignment of teachers within districts, and the manipulation of factors that predict change in teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

Districts Should Make Their Hiring Decisions Early in the Summer

Four of the five teachers who participated in the qualitative study were hired by the district in late August, within two weeks of the start of school. Ms. Gustin and Ms. DiAngelo were hired within one week of the opening of school. While Ms. Lincoln was hired in May, she did not learn of her actual teaching assignment until late August.

The practice of hiring shortly before the start of the school year provides little opportunity for novices, who are anxious to prepare for their first assignment, to get set both mentally and instructionally. Each of the teachers in the qualitative study wished she had had greater opportunity to prepare for the year. Each was excited about her first position, and did the best she could given the timeframe to get oriented to the school, set up her room, review the curriculum, prepare materials and lesson plans, and purchase needed items. All of the novices felt they would have been more effective teachers at the start of the year if they had had more time to prepare.

The critical factor that prevented the district from hiring earlier was contractual in nature, not financial. By July 1 school officials had a budget with which to work, that stipulated funded teaching positions. But the personnel office had to accommodate teachers returning from leaves and sabbaticals, and transfers to openings that occurred during the summer, before committing to new teachers.

Urban districts will facilitate the transition of novices into the profession if they find ways to expedite hiring decisions. This may require renegotiating the notification date by which currently employed teachers must commit to the next school year

and/or streamlining the process by which hiring decisions are made. Currently, the personnel department narrows the range of candidates. Principals must wait for clearance from the personnel department to begin interviews. After conducting interviews, the principal then recommends the teacher to be hired to the personnel department.

Districts Should Provide Both Formal and Informal Induction Opportunities

Districts should develop formal programs for orienting novice teachers to school life. Coupled with the late hiring date, the lack of formal induction procedures results in an abrupt entry to school life. Except for Ms. Mazer's school, the other four schools did not provide a formal orientation to school procedures and the physical plant. The elementary teachers were provided little or no overview of the curriculum, and the special education teachers were left on their own to learn procedures and record keeping systems.

In several schools, novices were provided "buddy teachers" to increase their access to pedagogical expertise, organizational savvy, and socioemotional support. In no case was the abrupt entry into teaching relieved by "altering the student load that novice teachers confront, or by slowing the pace at which they assume the full tasks of teaching" (Little, 1990a, p. 330).

The school system did provide a series of Monday afternoon inservice workshops for their newly-hired teachers. All of the five teachers in my qualitative study participated in these sessions, and found them to be of mixed value. The weakness of the workshops was the fact that all newly-hired teachers, regardless of assignment, were provided the same presentations. For example, while each found the sessions on teachers' rights and special education procedures to be helpful, the secondary teachers failed to see the utility of requiring them to sit through a workshop on the use of manipulatives in elementary mathematics.

One benefit of the Monday workshops was the informal learning that occurred. Many beginning teachers are one of only a few novices in their building or department. The teachers in the qualitative study looked forward to the sessions because it was an opportunity to meet with other beginners and compare notes and strategies. A primary value of the meetings seemed to be the opportunity for support and commiseration that the workshops provided.

Districts can support the induction experience by structuring opportunities for novice teachers to meet periodically and discuss their experiences. These sessions may take the form of seminars that are facilitated by an experienced educator or may be discussions involving novice teachers only. One format for such discussion would be to have a different beginner host the discussion each session, and be responsible for presenting a case study based on her/his own experience as the stimulus for discussion.

Districts Should Attend to Teacher Age, Opportunities for Collaboration, and School Resources When Assigning Novices

Age: The results of the quantitative component of this study reveal that age is an important predictor of the first-year experience (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). Many older beginning teachers, like Ms. Arden and Ms. Gustin, are entering a second career. Unlike older experienced teachers, second career teachers see themselves as teachers by choice, have a strong sense of mission, see themselves as agents of social change, and view themselves as professionals (Freidus & Krasnow, 1991). These self-reported characteristics appear to be critical counterbalances to the disadvantages that result from low resource levels.

Opportunities for Collaboration: Because teacher age and opportunities for collaboration are strong predictors of changes in self-efficacy beliefs (Chester, 1991a, 1991b), district placement policy should attend to these variables. Within the constraints of certification, contractual, and other staffing considerations, a systematic

attempt to place younger beginning teachers in schools with cultures that have a strong collegial norm is likely to enhance novices' belief that they have the ability to influence the growth of their students. Where vacancies must be filled in schools with low levels of collaboration, older beginning teachers are more likely than their younger colleagues to have a successful experience.

School Resources: The results of this study suggest that the distribution and level of resources is not simply a matter of "more is better." Where uneven access to resources is the reality, the prediction of which teachers are more likely to benefit from abundant or limited resources should be considered. Young teachers, whether experienced or not, who have access to high levels of resources, should have a high level of support and/or structure to assist them in managing the array of instructional and curricular options.

Older beginning teachers appear to have the ability and volition to overcome low levels of resource. Where choices must be made, older novices are more likely to experience positive change in efficacy beliefs in the face of low levels of resource than are older experienced teachers (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

Manipulating the Alterable Factors

Schools can influence teachers' feelings of efficacy and empowerment by attending to collegiality norms and supervisors' attention to teacher performance.

Schools should structure opportunities for collaboration: School districts should promote teacher and administrator collaboration and offer support and incentives to building principals to develop collegial norms. Institutions that offer greater opportunities for teachers to reflect on teaching and learning with their colleagues; for teachers to share the responsibility for making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction; and for administrators and teachers to collaborate and communicate foster more positive changes in self-efficacy beliefs of both novice and

experienced teachers than schools where such opportunities are few (Chester, 1991a, 1991b).

Increased opportunities for collaboration can be provided by organizing faculty in a manner that requires the interaction and cooperation of teachers and administrators. The middle school (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) and the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1992) models are examples of organizational structures that promote collaboration. The provision of time for teachers to meet together, along with the expectation that such time will be used to work cooperatively on school matters, also will promote collaboration.

Teachers and administrators can organize meetings around issues of instruction or student performance. Videotapes of teachers or student assessment results can provide the starting points for discussions of issues critical to teachers. Through such initiatives, faculty can work together to improve the results of schooling and a climate can be established that values the interchange of ideas.

Administrators should attend to the performance of their teachers: School administrators and supervisors should be required to take an active role in the supervision and evaluation of teachers. Whether experienced or not, teachers benefitted from working with an administrator who paid attention to instructional performance issues. Teachers appreciated objective feedback that was focused on important aspects of instruction. They wanted clear messages about where they stood in relation to the expectations that their supervisors held for them.

Supervision and evaluation should be viewed as an interactive process. Administrators and supervisors must be provided the training in supervision and evaluation that will permit them to provide valued feedback to teachers and to facilitate conversations about teaching and learning. The central administration can set the expectation that administrators will take an active role in instructional

supervision, and can model such behavior by visiting classrooms and discussing instructional performance with faculty.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

In this section I identify issues raised by this study and suggest promising direction for further research.

This study was based largely on teacher self-perception, which raises a validity question. Can we assume that self-reports of collaboration and supervisor observations, for example, are accurate? Given the influence of the collaboration variable on changes in self-efficacy beliefs, and the attention being paid to this variable in the reform literature, future studies should provide more indepth, probing validation of self-reported collaboration opportunities. This can be achieved through observational accounts and through comparison of teacher reports with those of administrators and colleagues from the same building.

Resource allocation is a critical issue in many urban schools, particularly in light of dwindling fiscal resources. Future research should differentiate between human and material resources, and instructional and non-instructional materials. Curricular and instructional materials may be an important variable that is moderated by the age and experience of the teacher. Further research on the interaction of resources and age should also consider the effect of years of teaching experience. It may be that among experienced teachers, age is essentially a proxy for years of experience. Perhaps the critical influence is not that of age, but rather one of socialization into the profession.

The importance that the teachers in my qualitative study placed on their supervisors' regard for performance issues was substantial. I used the number of supervisor observations to represent this construct in the quantitative study (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). Future quantitative research should gather data that more closely

captures supervisors' attentiveness to teacher performance and growth. Consideration of not only number of observations, but focus of feedback, provision of professional development opportunities that target indicators of effectiveness identified through the teacher evaluation process, and timing of supervisory activities during the induction year, may contribute to our understanding of teacher performance issues and growth in self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes.

While the quantitative component of this study attended to change in efficacy, there was no attempt to account for differences between novices' levels of efficacy on either the initial or follow-up surveys (Chester, 1991a, 1991b). Perhaps the effect of policy-manipulable variables is different for teachers who begin teaching with the highest self-efficacy beliefs than it is for those who start with low levels of efficacy. Or perhaps novices who begin with the lowest self-efficacy beliefs compensate for their perceived inability to exert action and influence through diminished expectations for students. Further research may be designed to account for differences in level of efficacy beliefs between teachers.

This study suggests that change in beginning teacher self-efficacy beliefs is mediated by factors that school districts can alter. Still unclear is whether changes in self-efficacy beliefs affect teacher recruitment, attrition, and performance. Is, for example, a high level of self-efficacy belief related to a teacher's inclination to take responsibility for student learning in her classroom? Further research on the relationship between efficacy beliefs, teacher career patterns, and teacher performance is needed. Such studies may suggest strategies for, and the consequences of, attending to variables that influence change in the self-efficacy mechanism.

Finally, this study focused on teachers in urban schools. Future studies may consider both urban and non-urban schools to determine whether the effects of

collaboration, resources, and supervisor attention to teacher performance can be generalized beyond urban schools.

CONCLUSION

Within urban schools, the first-year experience is mediated by factors that can be altered by school authorities. To initiate policy that will positively impact beginning teachers' experiences, districts must attend to both the person-specific characteristics of novices and individual school contexts. It is through the interaction of individuals with their institutional environments that the induction year can best be understood.

Many novice teachers in urban districts learn of their assignment less than two weeks before the start of school. Many beginning teachers receive no formal induction to the school and district, yet opportunities to learn about relevant school policies and to meet with other novices are valued activities. Districts that make their hiring decisions early, and provide appropriate induction experiences, will help to ease the transition into teaching and provide opportunities for novices to prepare for their assignment.

The findings of this study suggest that schools can predict which beginning teachers are likely to feel efficacious in particular school environments by considering teacher age and school culture when making assignments. By promoting opportunities for adult collaboration, and encouraging administrator attention to the instructional performance of teachers, urban schools can positively affect the induction-year experience. In fact, both experienced and novice newly-hired teachers benefit when placed in schools with high levels of collaboration, where administrators attend to the instructional dimension of teachers' work. This benefit is revealed through teachers' attitudes towards teaching, and beliefs about their ability to influence students' academic progress and exercise control over the events that affect their professional lives.

Further research on the relationships between the alterable factors identified in this study, attitudes toward teaching, self-efficacy beliefs, teacher instructional effectiveness, and teacher recruitment and attrition promises to inform policy that can influence the quality of teaching and learning in urban schools.

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